ANTI-CORRUPTION, THE MISSING PIECE OF U.S. COUNTER
NARCOTICS STRATEGY IN AFGHANISTAN

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Anti-Corruption, the Missing Piece of U.S. Counter Narcotics Strategy in Afghanistan

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, my brother, my girlfriend, and my friends who have motivated me throughout my educational career. Without their support, I would not be where I am.
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Anti-Corruption, the Missing Piece of U.S. Counter Narcotics Strategy in Afghanistan
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This thesis examines the decade long struggle the United States and its allies have faced in the fight against the narcotics industry in Afghanistan. The analysis in this thesis examines the different U.S. governmental agencies and departments involved in the struggle against curbing narcotics trafficking out of Afghanistan. The analysis shows that through the many years spent, the billions of U.S. dollars spent, and the lives lost, the primary reason allowing narcotics to continue to be an essential part of Afghanistan is corruption. The data analyzed came from governmental reports, academic research, and from independent think tanks. It covered the different agencies and departments that combated the narcotics industry in Afghanistan. Through the analysis of the data, it is demonstrated that combating corruption should have been the primary facet of the U.S. counter narcotics policy for Afghanistan from the beginning.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The narcotics industry of Afghanistan has been a principal aspect of the economy for the nation since 1979. Almost everyone in Afghanistan, from the war lords to local farmers, have a connection to the drug economy. Mujahedeen leaders (in their efforts to fight the Soviet invasion) would tax local growers and transporters as well as participate in the drug trade directly from time to time. The narcotics trade continued well after the Soviets left Afghanistan because it allowed those who had come to power during the Soviet invasion to keep their positions through cultural loyalty and political connections (Blanchard, 2007b, p. 23). The Taliban dominated the narcotics industry during the post-Soviet years by allowing the opium production to continue. They maintained their control by taxing the narcotics production and distribution of those who opposed them ideologically, primarily the Northern Alliance (NA). The NA commanders taxed the transportation of narcotics as well as continuing to allow the production of narcotics (Blanchard, 2007b, p. 24).

Afghanistan produced 450 MT of opium in 1999 leading the international community to pressure the nation to curb production. In 2000, the Taliban enacted a law that aimed to stop the narcotics industry but in effect allowed for the continued trade of opium. Production dropped to 185 MT primarily coming from northern Afghanistan, territory controlled by the NA. At this time, the international community perceived the Taliban policy as a positive step in the fight against narcotics internationally. Today, however, the Taliban policy is seen as a strategic strategy by the Taliban to raise the value of the opium they had stored. At the 2001 Bonn conference, which created the interim Afghan government, the international community encouraged the Afghans to get involved in the fight against narcotics flowing out of Afghanistan (Blanchard, 2007b, p. 24).

This flow of narcotics continued even with the presence of United States after September 11th. Counter narcotics became a central focus of the U.S. mission in Afghanistan beginning in January 2003 after the Bush administration announced that Afghanistan was major narcotics transportation and processing nation. This sentiment continued when “in
January 2004, as it had in January 2003, the Bush Administration again determined that Afghanistan was a major drug transit or illicit drug producing country” (Katzman, 2004, p. CRS-18). The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) goal for counter narcotics programs in Afghanistan was the reduction of poppy cultivation with the long-term goal of achieving “a poppy-free North between 2005 and 2010 (21 out of 34 provinces)” (The White House, 2008, p. 141).

The funding for this mission began with U.S. $60 million spread out over FY 2003-FY 2006 (fifteen million U.S. dollars for each year) for counter-narcotics assistance (Katzman, 2004, p. CRS-41). The allocation of financial assistance came from S. 2712, the Afghanistan Freedom Support Act of 2002 (Katzman, 2004, p. CRS-41). However, this was not the end of the financial assistance going to Afghanistan for counter narcotics activities. Much of the additional funding came in the form of

[U.S.] $220 million to assist Afghanistan’s counter-narcotics effort and to train Afghan police, both handled by INL. Of that, $170 million was appropriated in the FY2004 supplemental appropriation (P.L. 108-106), and $50 million is being provided from the post-September 11 “Emergency Response Fund.” The supplemental also provided [U.S.] $73 million for Defense Department counter-narcotics activities in Afghanistan, virtually all of which has been spent. (Katzman, 2005, p. CRS-18)

My thesis explores the evolution of American drug policy in Afghanistan. It will analyze how the United States changed its policies over time and the effect it had on the people in Afghanistan. The core of my thesis will address issues regarding narcotics industry in Afghanistan and the shortcomings of U.S. policies. The agencies and governmental departments analyzed are those that are primarily responsible for monitoring the narcotics trade. Though there are a variety of reasons for the continued narcotics industry in Afghanistan, I will demonstrate that the U.S. failed in its policy objectives because the U.S. missed or choose to ignore the signs that corruption was a vital aspect of the continued narcotics industry in Afghanistan. This will be supported with numerical data that will show that the impact of the set forth polices was not a decrease in the size of the Afghan narcotics industry. My thesis concludes by exploring future suggestions for policy makers when faced with similar circumstances. Thomas Donnelly, Resident Fellow and Director, Center for Defense Studies at American Enterprise Institute, best explained it in saying “the underlying problem is the corruption of the Afghan government…” (Donnelly, 2009).
CHAPTER 2

METHODS

The analysis conducted for this thesis occurred by analyzing academic papers, governmental reports, and expert analyses of the U.S. counter narcotics policies for Afghanistan. I gathered the data necessary from the Congressional Research Service (CRS) reports, congressional hearings, and U.S. departmental reports. The next step in the process was examining academic reports, analyses from think tanks, and academic journal articles which allowed me to break down much of the data found in the governmental sources as well as gather more information such as interviews, independent studies, and non-governmental expert opinions. The next step in the analysis was to take the material gathered from the various sources and to analyze what policies the U.S. had enacted in Afghanistan in their efforts to counter the Afghan narcotics industry.

An important start through the process of understanding U.S. counter narcotics policies in Afghanistan was to analyze the numerical data gathered from the governmental and academic reports. This data was used to demonstrate the increases and decreases of the Afghan narcotics industry and U.S. spending during the duration of American intervention in the Afghan narcotics industry. The data is assembled in figures that show the year to year changes in the number of different facets of the Afghan narcotics industry. This numerical data is applied to the policy changes of the different U.S. governmental departments and agencies that addressed the narcotics industry in Afghanistan.

After the information is explained and analyzed, the results of the analysis will demonstrate why the U.S. failed to address the counter narcotics industry in Afghanistan through its failing to make corruption a top priority. This section also includes a discussion of how this possibly could have been corrected through the years. However, it is important to note that there is a limitation to my research. It must be noted that all data in this thesis has come from open sources. Any information not publically available may affect the conclusions drawn in this thesis.
To begin with, it is important to demonstrate the increases and decreases throughout the years in the cultivation of opium poppy in Afghanistan because of the important role this has played in the narcotics history of Afghanistan. Figure 1 lays out the number of hectares that were used to grow opium poppy in Afghanistan over years of U.S. counter narcotics policies in Afghanistan. The data shows that the increasing amount of hectares that were being cultivated by Afghans to grow the poppy plant. The number of hectares increase starting from 2001 and continue to increase till 2007. Though the number of hectares drop in 2008 and continue to drop in 2009, the hectares, from that point on, maintain relative stability.


Figure 2 displays the amounts of different narcotics seized in Afghanistan in kilograms. This is important to display because the goals of the U.S. departments and agencies was to curb the narcotics flowing out of Afghanistan. The data shows us that the narcotics industry in Afghanistan showed increases and decreases in seizures. There was no consistency in seizure numbers through all eight years examined in this figure. For example, the seizure rates for opium (raw and unprepared) do not increase or even decease with any
consistency. Furthermore, the seizure of cannabis resin dramatically rises in 2008 with the rest of the years being relatively stable.

Figure 3 displays the changes in U.S. counter narcotics funding for Afghanistan. This numerical data is important to display because this is an important aspect of the analysis of the counter narcotics efforts in Afghanistan because it shows what the U.S. spent. This figure also shows the relative stability, with the exception of FY 2006, in the millions that the U.S. spent in Afghanistan. Also, Figure 3 shows us that there was no major spending on the issue of counter narcotics in Afghanistan till FY 2004.

Figure 4 is the ranking of Afghanistan on the Corruption Perceptions Index, a ranking of nations by Transparency International. The most important aspect of this figure is that even though this index is looks at 180 nations (most years), Afghanistan remained high on the list as one of the most corrupt out of all the nations but the U.S. continued spending and focusing on other aspects of the counter narcotics efforts in Afghanistan. Though data is not
available for 2006, the large jump from 2005 to 2007 and the stabilization of the numbers from then on demonstrate the survivability of corruption in Afghanistan.

Figure 5 based on a national survey taken in Afghanistan about corruption within the nation, shows that Afghans do not find that their government is doing enough to address one of the largest issues in their nation. What this shows is that there is not a lot of confidence in what is happening in Afghanistan in addressing this serious issue. Also, this demonstrates that even though the U.S. has spent millions of dollars through numerous programs in Afghanistan, a majority of Afghans still feel that their government has not done enough to solve what they see as a serious problem. This is relevant to the discussion of U.S. counter narcotics policy failures in Afghanistan because it demonstrates that corruption is still a major concern for the people of Afghanistan a decade after the counter narcotics efforts began in Afghanistan.

In addition, the same survey said that sixty three percent of the people who responded said that in the past twelve months they feel that they there has not been some improvements in reducing corruption in any public institution (Integrity Watch Afghanistan, 2010, p. 31). Figure 6 shows the percentage of respondents from the same survey that said they faced corruption in every level of the judicial system, an important factor in considering the levels of corruption in the government of Afghanistan.
In order to better understand the results of the thesis, I examined many different variables that affected the counter narcotics strategies in Afghanistan. To begin with, I analyzed what the Taliban did in their tenure in Afghanistan. Next, I examined the U.S. entry into Afghanistan and the “Five Pillar Strategy”, the strategy that characterized the U.S. counter narcotics policies in Afghanistan. Following this examination, I analyzed the U.S. department and agencies that were involved in the U.S. attempt to curb the narcotics industry in Afghanistan and their failures. In addition, this thesis examined what other nations and organizations have done in the counter narcotics effort. The last part examined is the perception of locals perception with what the U.S. and our allies have done to curb the Afghan counter narcotics industry.

**TALIBAN ERA POLICIES**

After the Soviets left Afghanistan, a weak and unsuccessful government emerged. There were a number of issues such as

Decentralization of the war economy led to a regime of private extraction whereby private economic actors enjoyed exclusive, unregulated, and untaxed control over the income generated by resources. The lawlessness, criminality and corruption of this period contributed to the groundswell of support for the Taliban, particularly in the south of the country when they first emerged in 1994. (Goodhand, 2008, p. 408)

These issues were compounded because a new coalition formed between the Taliban and the merchants who operated the Afghanistan-Pakistan border area. These merchants, who largely operated trucking and smuggling businesses, were destabilized by the turmoil of being under the rule of warlords (Goodland, 2008, p. 408). The Taliban were able to consolidate their power by taking control of over ninety percent of Afghanistan primarily through taxing opium. Eventually, this became their largest source of revenue generation (McCoy, 2003, p. 508). This allowed the Taliban to become involved in the narco-economy in every corner of Afghanistan. According to Goodhand, “opium was a de facto legal commodity, as indicated by its cultivation on prime agricultural land” (Goodhand, 2008). The record levels of
narcotics production in 1999 lead the international community to pressure the Taliban to ban narcotic production. They were able to effectively ban narcotics production in 2000 through oppressive means. However, many have speculated that there were other reasons for this ban besides simply banning narcotics. This created a nation that “over the years developed the know-how, expertise and market connections to build upon these comparative advantages in order to survive, accumulate, or wage war” (Goodhand, 2008, p. 408). This is the situation the U.S. faced when it entered the effort to counter the narcotics industry of Afghanistan.

**THE FIVE PILLAR STRATEGY**

On November 17, 2004, Robert Charles, the Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, announced “Plan Afghanistan”. The plan was a $780 million (USD) (FY2005 funds) program to raise public awareness about the pitfalls of the narcotics industry in Afghanistan, promote alternative livelihoods, and conduct interdiction and crop eradication (Katzman, 2005, p. CRS-18). This was the beginning of what would characterize the next several years of the U.S. counter narcotics policy towards the narcotics industry in Afghanistan. The U.S. and its international partners had to address the increasing amount of narcotics coming out of Afghanistan with a more comprehensive plan. The new U.S. plan would mirror the Afghan narcotics industry, based heavily on cooperation between different agencies and other nations. The new strategy, known as the five pillar strategy was public information, judicial reform, alternative livelihood development, interdiction, and eradication (Blanchard, 2009).

The first part of this new strategy, public information, intended to function as a supporting mechanism for Afghanistan’s counter narcotics efforts (Blanchard, 2009, p. 42). The campaign’s purpose was to warn local Afghan farmers of the dangers of being involved in the narcotics trade. The dangers that were addressed were the illegality, dangers of drug abuse, and possible economic pitfalls. The strategy also included working with local and religious leadership to encourage a ban on poppy cultivation. Leaders from Afghanistan’s General Council of Ulema supported this effort by publicly condemning poppy cultivation and involvement in the drug trade.

Joint U.S.-Afghan Counternarcotics Advisory Teams (CNAT) worked as provincial level advisors, beginning in 2006. They convened hundreds of counter narcotics meetings.
between local and central government officials. The intended purpose of these meetings was to support the governor-led efforts to reduce poppy cultivation at the local level. The State Department stated that there were over 100 awareness and outreach meetings across seven provinces “including Farah, Helmand, Uruzgan, and Kandahar” (Blanchard, 2009, p. 42). There was some evidence that farmers across Afghanistan were well aware of the government’s ban on opium poppy cultivation, as demonstrated from UNODC/MCN surveys since 2005. The same survey’s results showed that religion played an important role in the decision making process of whether or not Afghan farmers got involved in the drug trade. This was especially true for those who were not already involved in the narcotics industry (Blanchard, 2009, p. 43).

The next major pillar of the U.S. strategy was reforming the judicial process in Afghanistan. This pillar was based largely on the Department of State and the Department of Justice assisting the Afghan judicial system and its prosecutors in handling the high profile cases they were faced with. This included creating a Criminal Justice Task Force (CJTF) that was made up of “integrated teams of prosecutors and investigators that are being specially trained to handle complex, high-profile cases” (Blanchard, 2009, p. CRS-43). The effort of the U.S. and international partners included the creation new counter narcotics law in December 2005 that clarified “administrative authorities for counter narcotics policy and establishes clear procedures for investigating and prosecuting major drug offenses” (Blanchard, 2009, p. CRS-43). The U.S. even called on Afghan authorities to start prosecuting corrupt officials and begin to make cases that would stand up in court under the new law in 2006.

Furthermore, a Criminal Justice Task Force (CJTF) prepared cases for the Central Narcotics Tribunal under the care of fourteen specially trained judges. Through the years of U.S involvement in judicial reform, Afghan and coalition officials worked together in identifying targets to be prosecuted. Some of the most high profile cases were handled by the U.S. in the form of direct assistance or transfer from Afghanistan to the U.S (Blanchard, 2009, p. 43).

The third part of the U.S. strategy for counter narcotics in Afghanistan was creating an alternative livelihood option for Afghanistan, managed by USAID. The first part of this pillar began with “agricultural development at the farm level” (Ahrari, Felbab-Brown,
Shelley & Hussain, 2009, p. 18). The plan was designed to develop the infrastructure in the agricultural market place within and outside the nation so the crops grown by local farmers could compete with the salary brought to them by poppy plants. Furthermore, this strategy was designed to put farmers into labor intensive work such as fixing and cleaning irrigation canals so that high profit legal crops could be grown, allowing them alternatives to growing poppy. A major aspect of this pillar was that local farmers received an income not to grow opium in cooperation with local councils. This part of the pillar also included farmer education and micro credit lending (Blanchard, 2009, p. CRS-29).

The second part of this pillar was long term development. This segment of the pillar was made up of “comprehensive development programs [that] accelerated existing agricultural development initiatives and initiated new infrastructure development, credit and financial services expansion, agricultural diversification, and private investment support in urban and rural areas” (Blanchard, 2009, p. 42). A written understanding that all poppy cultivation would be stopped in order for the benefits of any of these programs to be put into effect was the basis upon which all these goals were to be met. This included different cash for work programs. Most importantly, the money for this segment came from the “good performers initiative” (Tarnoff, 2010, p. 10).

Overall, the primary support for this pillar came from USAID’s funding which attempted to create a better licit market for local farmers to earn a living. This economic and rural development pillar targeted the provinces that had been growing the most poppy. It complimented the eradication pillar because it allowed those farmers who lost their poppy crop to have an income.

The next pillar of the U.S. counter narcotics strategy in Afghanistan was interdiction. This pillar centered essentially on the work the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) did with locals and other representatives of other nations to stop the flow of drugs out of Afghanistan since 2002. The DEA began with Operation Containment in early 2002 (Blanchard, 2004, pp. CRS-24-CRS-25). While this pillar largely developed around the idea of controlling the trafficking of drugs into other nations, it evolved to include stopping the supply of drugs and money moving between groups that supplied insurgents fighting against the U.S. and its allies. In addition, the DEA lead Operation Topaz which was directed at stopping the
movement of acetic anhydride, a chemical necessary to produce heroin, from getting into Afghanistan.

Part of this pillar included training of local law enforcement by U.S. personnel in intelligence operations, equipment operation, and conducting joint operations (Blanchard, 2004, p. CRS-25). The DEA expanded to include Foreign Advisory and Support Teams (FAST). The key goal of the FAST teams was to provide guidance, do bilateral investigations to identify targets, and disrupt drug trafficking organizations. This pillar also included and needed DoD transport and construction assistance because there was a need for foundational support to complete the operations that would take place on the ground. The DEA also created a system by which they would serve as mentors to Afghan National Interdiction Unit. In FY 2006, the money appropriated to the DEA was raised to expand FAST operations, support Operation Containment, and to open new offices. There were plans to expand the presence of the DEA in Afghanistan to over 50 agents and staff. However, 13 DEA agents and three pilots were in Afghanistan as of March 2009 (Blanchard, 2009, 45).

The DEA got permission to accompany U.S. military on operational raids of drug related sites in December 2006. Military personnel did not have permission to specifically target narcotics locations or destroy them unless part of routine military activities or as part of conventional counter terrorism activities. They often played a backup role with air support or intelligence to drug interdiction forces, Afghan authorities, and the DEA through a fusion center.

The final pillar of the U.S. Five Pillar Strategy was eradication. The first developments of the eradication policy were implemented in 2004 (Zarif, 2008, p. 63). Prior to the American strategy including eradication, the Afghan Central Poppy Eradication Force did most of the eradication in Afghanistan. U.K. intelligence officers, U.S. advisors, and private contractors assisted them. Local governors often also led these eradication teams. The governor led teams gave the local leaders more initiative but there were some draw backs. For example, there were concerns about the reliability of the results. As Zarif explains in his work, the UNODC surveyors reported that governors exaggerated their eradication claims and large portions of cultivated poppy area were left untouched even after eradication teams reportedly made their sweeps through them, and that this only added to the perception that there was ample opportunity for the use of coercion,
negotiated dealings to avoid eradication enforcement, and bribery to exercise influence over counter-narcotic strategy implementation. (pp. 62-63)


The Karzai government insisted that if the U.S. was to come into Afghanistan and conduct eradication operations that they are done by eradication teams on the ground (Government of Canada, 2008, p. 1). This led to more “men dragging metal bars across poppy fields behind all-terrain vehicles to knock down plants,” and created an environment that was slow, dangerous, and inefficient (United States, 2009, p. 6). It is also important to note that there was some support within Afghanistan for aerial spraying. In 2004 and 2005, State Department counter-narcotics officials were under the impression that they had an understating with

A large number of influential clerics and tribal leaders in southern Afghanistan to support aerial spraying. President Karzai agreed tentatively to a pilot project. But the Afghan cabinet rejected the idea outright, banning all forms of aerial spraying. ‘Some of them were protecting the source of their own wealth.’ (United States, 2009, 7)

In late June 2009, Ambassador Holbrooke announced the end of eradication pillar at the G-8 conference. The new strategy would include a “shift from its strategy from destroying poppy fields to interdicting drug supplies, destroying processing labs that turn opium into heroin, and promoting alternative crops. He added that the State Department would incrementally change the counter narcotics policy in Afghanistan and shift the funding from eradication towards assisting growth of Afghanistan agriculture economy (United States, 2009, p. 8).

In the summer of 2009, the U.S released a new framework for addressing the counter narcotics industry in Afghanistan. Vanda Felbab-Brown, Fellow in Foreign Policy at The 21st Century Defense Initiative in The Brookings Institution, a liberal think tank, described the new policy as

Instead of emphasizing premature eradication of poppy crops, the new policy centers on increased interdiction and rural development. This approach strongly enhances the new counterinsurgency policy focus on providing security to the rural population, instead of being preoccupied with the numbers of incapacitated Taliban and al Qaeda. (Felbab-Brown, 2009, p. 1)
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DoD)

The Department of Defense had a limited role with the counter narcotics policy in Afghanistan. This role restricted military personnel to only destroying narcotics when they came across them during combat missions. The Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs best describes the DoD’s presence in the counter narcotics activities Afghanistan when he said,

For several years I have been calling on the United States and on NATO’s military leadership in Afghanistan to change their policy of ignoring narco-trafficking. Right now, they will only destroy opium stockpiles and drug laboratories if they happen to come across them during other combat operations. (United States, 2007a, p. 1)

The DoD first received funding for counter narcotics actions in Afghanistan in FY2004. Under the FY2004 Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense and for the Reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan (P.L. 108-106), the Defense Department received $73 million (USD) (Blanchard, 2004, p. CRS-34). Beginning in 2004, the DoD focused its counter narcotics efforts by working with and improving Afghanistan’s border security and providing greater intelligence support to Afghan law enforcement through the DEA. The DoD would share intelligence through “joint military/DEA intelligence fusion center” (Blanchard, 2004, p. CRS-28). However, the DoD began to take a more direct role in the counter narcotics missions beginning in 2007. They began by embedding DEA agents when entering areas that were “known or suspected [of having] drug-related activity” (United States, 2007a, p. 10). In 2006 and into 2007, Afghan forces got assistance from the DoD with training. Thomas Schweich, Coordinator for Counter-narcotics and Justice Reform in Afghanistan, U.S. Department of State, explained that this included DEA trained Afghan pilots flying MI-17 helicopters provided to the counter narcotics police of Afghanistan by the DoD (United States, 2007b, p. 38).

In FY 2007, the DoD received $100 (USD) million in the Defense Appropriations Act that was specifically designated for the counter narcotics mission in Afghanistan (Souder, 2006, p. 2). Their role expanded in FY 2008 to include “provid[ing] significant support to U.S. and partner nation drug law enforcement agencies in the areas of training, communications support, infrastructure, intelligence, transportation, equipment, command and control, and detection and monitoring” (The White House, 2009, p. 24). In addition,
DoD counter-narcotics support expands Afghan interdiction capabilities including specialized unit training and equipping of counter-narcotics forces, providing training and operational bases and facilities, an organic aviation capacity and capability, and providing the information required for both interdiction operations and prosecutions. (The White House, 2009, p. 26)

The Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Counter Narcotics and Global Threats with oversight from the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy was the single focal point for DoD's counterdrug activities. It also ensured that the DoD developed and implemented a focused counter narcotics program with clear priorities and measured results. Consistent with applicable laws, authorities, regulations, and funding/resources availability, DoD was to ensure that sufficient forces and resources are allocated to the counter-narcotics mission to achieve high-impact results. In FY 2009, $204.5 million (USD) was enacted to “provide for critical intelligence support to national policies designed to dismantle narcotics trafficking and international terrorist organizations benefiting from drug trafficking” (The White House, 2009, p. 23). In FY 2010, the DoD saw an increase of $18.6 million (USD) for their missions related to counter-narcotics but no major change in the way they approached the issues on the ground. The additional money was for “additional requested supplemental appropriations for intelligence and technology operations in support of U.S. government CN efforts in Afghanistan and Central Asia” (The White House, 2009, p. 23).

**Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA)**

The mission of the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) in Afghanistan was to “help the government target the command and control structures of the largest drug organizations in the country. DEA did this by building Afghan law enforcement institutions and by directly combating Afghan narcotics trafficking networks” (Schweich, 2007, p. 22). The DEA began their counter narcotics operations in 2002. As discussed earlier, their first mission was Operation Containment. The operation was organized to “implement a joint strategy to deprive drug trafficking organizations of their market access and international terrorist groups of financial support from drugs, precursor chemicals, weapons, ammunition and currency” (Blanchard, 2009, pp. 42-43). As part of this plan, the DEA had Special Agents and intelligence professionals in Afghanistan and in trafficking countries around Afghanistan, primarily Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Romania, and Belgium. They also helped train counter narcotics personnel, including creating “Sensitive Investigative Units in
Uzbekistan and Pakistan to screen, train, and equip local law enforcement personnel and improve their ability to interdict Afghan opiates and shut down regional trafficking syndicates” (Blanchard, 2004, p. CRS-25). The operation seized

17.3 metric tons (MT) of heroin, 7.7 MT of morphine base, 8.9 MT of opium, 230 MT of cannabis, 11 heroin labs, and made 693 arrests between the first quarter, FY 2002 and the end of the first quarter, FY 2005. Of those amounts, 2.4 MT of heroin, 985 kilograms of morphine base, 3 MT of opium gum, 153 MT cannabis and 195 arrests were netted in just the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2005. (Byrom, 2005, p. 126)

In addition, within the first nine months of the operation in 2004, the DEA seized 14,932 kg of heroin (Blanchard, 2004, p. CRS-25). The DEA also started Operation Topaz in 2002. The operation’s target was stopping the chemical acetic anhydride, used primarily to make heroin, from reaching Afghanistan (Blanchard, 2004, p. CRS-25).

The DEA reopened their office in Kabul in February 2003 but they could not conduct many of the missions they wanted to do because of security concerns. Their policy eventually changed allowing them to go into the field only if certain security guidelines were met. However, these were difficult guidelines to meet. By March of 2005, the DEA presence had grown to include “12 permanent and temporary-duty staff in country who conduct investigations into trafficking networks and coordinate DEA activities with the Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan (CFC-A) Intelligence Fusion Center and the Combined Joint Task Force – 76 (CJTF-76)” (Byrom, 2005, p. 127).

Beginning in October of 2004 (Byrom, 2005, p. 125), the DEA also trained Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA), the Afghanistan Special Narcotics Force (ASNF) and the National Interdiction Unit (NIU) of the CNPA as well as equipping them “to arrest and prosecute the command and control elements of narcotics trafficking organizations” (Schweich, 2007, p. 18). By March of 2005, the DEA had trained 77 officers including six female officers which allowed for females to be searched, a sensitive topic in the conservative culture of Afghanistan (Schweich, 2007, p. 127). As part of the training of officers in the NIU, the DEA developed Foreign-deployed Advisory Support Teams (FAST). These teams operated

The FAST groups, which are supported and largely funded by the Department of Defense, also will help with the destruction of existing opium storage sites, clandestine heroin processing labs, and precursor chemical supplies. Each of the five FAST groups will consist of a Supervisory Special Agent, four Special
Agents and one Intelligence Research Specialist. The FAST groups, who have received specialized training, will be deployed in Afghanistan, two groups at a time, and will rotate every 120 days. The remaining three groups will remain at the DEA Training Academy in Quantico, Virginia, where they will engage in training and provide operational support for the deployed teams. (Braun, 2005)

In June of 2006, DEA Administrator Karen Tandy testified before the House Armed Services Committee where she said narcotics “substantially contributes to instability, violence, and lawlessness in Afghanistan” (United States, 2007a, p. 9). In December 2006, DEA agents expanded their reach into Konduzn and areas in northern Afghanistan in an effort to expand as part of the northern Border Strategy. This objective of this strategy was to bring down the major shippers of the narcotics and money that moved across the border of Afghanistan with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. This plan also targeted more High Value Targets that were determined to be more closely linked to “Taliban terrorist activity and [were] being supported by the illicit narcotics trade” (Schweich, 2007, p. 53). Though this strategy was referred to as the ‘northern border strategy’, the HVTs that were targeted were more often in southern Afghan provinces such as Kandahar, Nimruz, and Helmand. In all, the DEA has received $127.37 (USD) million from FY2002 to FY 2009 for their counter narcotics activities in Afghanistan (Blanchard, 2009, p. 8). Starting in 2010, the DEA received air assets that were used as medivac and air support services to the DEA for their partnership with the Afghan government in their combined efforts in interdiction (Blanchard, 2009, p. 19).

DEPARTMENT OF STATE (DoS)

From the beginning of the U.S. counter narcotics mission in Afghanistan, the State Department has managed the U.S. Five Pillar Strategy in Afghanistan. Beginning in FY 2002, Congress appropriated over $2 billion (USD) to support the bulk of operations that took place in Afghanistan (United States, 2007a, p. 10). However, the State Department accelerated their involvement in counter narcotics activity in February 2004 by pressuring the United Kingdom and local Afghan authorities to better enforce the counter narcotics policies on the ground. In April 2004, the State Department began to push for more centralized efforts to enforce counter narcotics strategies and more importantly separate the alternative livelihood and eradication programs because they believed that ending future cultivation was more important. In April of 2004, the Central Poppy Eradication Force was established at the
request of the U.S. Towards the end of the same year, the urgent speed with which the State Department pushed a heavy handed approach to counter narcotics, relying heavily on eradication supported by Congress, resulted in the advocacy of aerial spraying from the fall of 2004 to the beginning of 2005. This resulted in heavy opposition from the Afghan government and the U.K. The heavy fall out from this pursuit for more eradication had poor results because the local population resisted against this policy as discussed earlier. Due in large part to the lack of success of a centralized eradication program, the state department began to reexamine using governor-led eradication teams (Byrom, 2005, p. 155).

In FY 2009, the State Department received, “$311.0 million [USD] ($216.0 million [USD] base + $46.0 million [USD] bridge supplemental + $49.0 million [USD] Spring supplemental request)” (The White House, 2009, p. 158). The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) supported programs that focused on Crop control through public information campaigns, province-based dissuasion against planting, and poppy elimination through pre-planting initiatives and provincial-led eradication of planted poppy, as well as drug control institution building that includes support for interdiction, public outreach and demand reduction, including drug prevention and treatment programs. (The White House, 2009, p. 159)

The State Department increased the importance of the Good Performers Initiative in FY 2009 by providing aggressive development in provinces that became and continued to be poppy free. Furthermore, in the same year, the state department’s activities included the Counter Narcotics Advisory Teams (CNAT) whose purpose was to support the local governors’ poppy reduction campaigns by providing the governor with the resources for a number of programs. Most importantly, the program operated in four of the highest poppy producing provinces (responsible for over ninety percent of all Afghan poppy: Helmand, Farah, Uruzgan and Kandahar) bringing the grand total to seven provinces. This program received support by the provincial Governor-Led Eradication (GLE) teams as well as the central government’s Afghan Poppy Eradication Force (PEF). This partnership worked because the PEF was able to conduct forced eradications where the governors were unwilling or unable. The INL continued its Public Information and Demand Reduction programs relaying heavily on local religious and cultural leaders to spread the message of counter narcotics. In addition, some of the programs focused on drug prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation.
In FY 2010, the State Department had a budget of $288.2 million (USD), a decrease of $22.8 million (USD) from FY 2009. This FY continued its emphasis on expanding the Afghan government’s abilities to control the narcotics flow through public information campaigns, province-based dissuasion against planting, and poppy elimination through pre-planting initiatives and provincial eradication of planted poppy, as well as drug control institution building which includes support for interdiction, public outreach, and demand reduction, including drug prevention and treatment programs. (The White House, 2009, p. 7)

The State Department continued its emphasis on the Good Performers Initiative and Counter-narcotics Advisory Teams (CNAT). Most importantly, the FY 2010 focused on an increase in a number of counter-narcotics programs. INL assisted the Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA) in the effort of expanding their law enforcement capabilities in other provinces. This was in addition to operating and maintaining facilities that support the Afghan Ministry of Interior’s interdiction forces. The funding for the FY also supported demand reduction actions through a national treatment system that assisted locals in varying locations across the country through residential, outpatient, and mobile treatment centers. The new system included counseling and rehabilitation service to those with drug problems.

A new aspect of the State Department’s activities in Afghanistan was the Critical Flight Safety Program (CSFP) which was designed “to extend the life of its aircraft fleet…” (Ford, 2004, p. 22). Started in FY 2009, with a budget of $43 million (USD), the CSFP was originally part of the American counter narcotics activities in Columbia. This new program expanded to Bolivia, Peru, and Pakistan. It allowed INL to protect their work in country by providing air support for those on the ground (The White House, 2009, p. 160).

In FY 2010, the State Department requested $365.132 million (USD) for the Economic Support Fund and Development Assistance accounts that are used for Alternative Development (AD) programs in the Andean region and in Afghanistan. Economic Support Funds for Afghanistan for FY 2010 had a budget of $185.0 million (USD), a $4.6 million (USD) decrease from FY 2009. This FY also included more funding for agricultural alternatives for Afghans because of the 4 year drought that had been devastating the nation. This is a significant factor to consider because the nation’s dependence on agriculture (The White House, 2009, p. 166).
UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (USAID)

From 2003-2007, USAID funded “$3.5 billion [USD] for reconstruction projects in Afghanistan, but from 2005 to 2006, its contributions declined 60 percent, from $1.5 billion to $617 million [USD]” (Colucci, 2007, p. 39). Through these years, however, the funding for USAID efforts in Afghanistan rose and fell. For example, by FY 2007, USAID allocation was at $802.8 million [USD] though they proposed a one billion dollar [USD] budget. This was a 29 percent decrease in overall spending for the country since 2004. Relatedly, the U.S. dollar amount USAID received for reconstruction fluctuated drastically. This created a reality in Afghanistan where it was difficult to program reconstruction projects (Colucci, 2007, p. 39). USAID funding provided assistance to nine Afghan provinces in FY 2007.

According to the FY2010 National Drug Control Strategy, USAID also implemented the Alternative Development with the purpose of

(1) Assist[ing] more than 375,000 Afghans (cash for work activities; business skills training; farmers trained in agricultural practices in targeted poppy provinces; and farmers receiving seed and fertilizer); (2) to rehabilitate, repair, and construct 203 kms. of rural roads, and (3) to support licit agricultural production on 124,898 hectares (which exceeded the target of 118,000 hectares). (The White House, 2009, p. 167)

In Afghanistan, “the AD Program-South funded aid in Helmand, Kandahar, and Uruzgan provinces; the AD Program-North provided assistance in Badakhshan and Takhar provinces; and the AD Program–East provided assistance in Kunar, Laghman, Nangarhar, and Nuristan provinces” (The White House, 2009, p. 167).

Due in large part to its continued economic support ($185 million [USD] in FY 2010), in FY 2010 USAID began working on renovating “irrigation systems, providing farmers with fertilizer and seeds, and is building roads to market centers” (The White House, 2009, p. 166). This plan received support by reports that during the previous few seasons, the licit agricultural production had nearly doubled raising the incomes of local farmers and promoting the planting of licit crops even though opium cultivation still accounted for 7% of Afghanistan’s GDP. In a continued effort to lower opium production, USAID still continued its polices to provide

Alternative economic opportunities to farmers to incentives them to discontinue planting narcotic crops. In particular USAID has managed an alternative livelihoods program in the four largest poppy producing provinces - Badakhshan,
Nangarhar, Kandahar, and Helmand. This funding supports cash-for work projects, expands availability of agricultural credit, and provides training and marketing assistance to help farmers increase their income from legitimate crops. USAID also provides training, demonstration centers and farm related business training to farmers to help them increase their income from legitimate crops. (The White House, 2009, p. 166)

**FOREIGN ASSISTANCE**

The U.K. served as the lead from the very beginning of the counter-narcotics effort in Afghanistan (United States, 2007a, p. 9). British officials estimated that 90%-95% of the opium in the U.K. comes from Afghanistan making Britain’s entry into the counter narcotics effort a necessity (Blanchard, 2004, p. 8). However, their efforts slowed from lack of personnel and policies that countered themselves (United States, 2009, p. 5). In March of 2006, the U.S. and U.K. created a joint counter-narcotics intelligence fusion center in London which focused on counter narcotics efforts on the heroin smuggled out of Afghanistan. In the beginning, the fusion center was only being used to gather intelligence but very little to no action was generated from it (United States, 2007a, p. 14).

Congressmen Steven Kirk, a member of the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee, was part of an effort to pressure the U.K. into a larger role in the counter narcotics efforts. He stated,

> In my view, it is time probably to let the country that is paying for most of this operation and leading most of it, the United States, to become the lead NATO partner here. While the British Government has provided enormous service to our efforts in Afghanistan, they represent less than a third of counternarcotic funding and operations, and to date the policies that they have put forward have been completely ineffective in the gathering danger. (United States, 2007a, pp. 7-8)

The U.K. faced this type of criticism regarding their actions for counter narcotics activity in Afghanistan. This was especially damaging because they asked and took the responsibility for serving as the principal in the counter narcotics fight but they were not successful in the eyes of the international community. This left the U.S. responsible for attempting to curb this trade beginning in 2004.

However, Thomas Schweich, Coordinator for Counter Narcotics and Justice Reform in Afghanistan in the State Department had this to say about his work with U.K. officials in the fight against counter narcotics. He said,

> The principal partner for us in fighting drugs in Afghanistan is the United Kingdom. There has been a lot of press about a rift between the U.S. and the U.K.
on that. I just don’t see it. I work with my U.K. counterparts on a regular basis. They come visit me, I visit them, we go to Afghanistan together. They have put hundreds of millions of [U.S] dollars into the effort. They have their troops in Helmand province, too, so they have a vested interest in getting rid of this problem since that is where more than half of the opium is. We are having more regular coordination meetings. They have gotten task force Helmand, which is the ISAF group in Helmand province, more involved in the counter-narcotics effort, and I have seen an even redoubled effort on the part of the United Kingdom over the past several months to help combat this trade. So if there is one country I would say is helping the most I would say it is the United Kingdom. (United States, 2007b, pp. 28-29)

Another prominent nation that affected the flow of narcotics in Afghanistan was Russia. Their concern lay in the narcotics industry coming out of Afghanistan because it is a funding mechanism for Chechen rebel groups (Blanchard, 2004, p. CRS-19). The EU also stepped into assist the U.S. efforts to curb the narcotics issues in Afghanistan. Their primary mission came in the form of

The EU-BOMCA17 project [which] was able to achieve several positive results in improving the legal and regulatory framework of border management, establishing operational training infrastructure and implementing border training capacity. Airport control is another consistent part of the BOMCA program together with the reinforcement of Border Crossing Points. Within the BOMCA program several training courses designed for the national Central Asian Border Police corps were held. (Ceccarelli, 2007, p. 29)

Arguably, the most important aspect of this assistance was the border crossing assistance that they were able to provide. Border security is a large and important aspect in the development of Afghanistan because the issue of narcotics led to instability in the nation and continues to do so. The assistance from this program helped in the counter narcotics efforts because it added to the struggles the narcotics smugglers in order to smuggle narcotics out of Afghanistan.

Finally, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) assisted in the counter narcotics efforts but providing "that would assume lead responsibility for security (U.S.), counter narcotics (United Kingdom), police training (Germany), judicial reform (Italy) and infrastructure development (Japan)" (Kicklighter & Krongard, 2007).

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

An important factor that must be considered in Afghanistan is the perception of foreign forces in the eyes of locals. This next section discusses how the actions of the U.S.
were perceived and more importantly how the Afghan tribal culture affected narco-corruption.

**Alienation of Locals**

Congressmen Jim Costa on the House Foreign Affairs committee said,

> I saw one of the recommendations talked about spraying the poppy fields. If you want to make farmers upset with you, I can tell you that this is a real clear way to do it. It is a rural area. I have flown over Kabul and Kandahar and the areas in between. I mean the reason besides that it is very lucrative and profitable, poppies can be stored and maintained in terms of the transportation system. (United States, 2007a, p. 53)

As Congressman Costa explained, the argument for not spraying the poppy fields was that it truly upset the local Afghan population, turning them against the U.S. and its allies. The aerial spraying campaign solidified the bond between the Afghan people and insurgents. The poppy crop is a reliable source of income that paid better than other sources of legal farming. The spraying attacked their way of life and simply put, these actions alienated the local population from the U.S. and our allies counter narcotics activities.

Another element that was considered were the effects on those who are involved in the drug trade besides the local farmer, such as “landowners…traffickers, officials, and insurgents,” that are involved in the drug trade as well (Blanchard, 2009, p. 25). The effects of eradication often affected them less leaving the local farmers to bear the brunt of the eradication. These upper level actors continued their business without concern of the eradication efforts because they have many different regions from where they draw their income. The local farmers are unable to move around freely in their country to grow poppy.

Often, many of the NGO’s that came into Afghanistan in the 1990’s and after have had to “cater to the desires of local commanders, who used them to build support within their patronage network” (Thier & Chopra, 2002, p. 899). These practices often lead to outright corruption disguised as patronage. This also created a situation where those who are supposed to help the population would have to spend their resources ensuring the happiness of those in charge in local area. This left locals with a system in which they had the least amount of support.
Lack of Local Support

This quote is an example of the support that U.S. needed from the local population because of the important role local support played in any Afghan counter narcotics effort.

In Afghanistan’s southern Helmand and neighboring provinces, drug traffickers and their Taliban allies reportedly order farmers to cultivate opium poppy in areas under their control and threaten individuals who support the government’s counternarcotic policy. Taliban forces reportedly protect some narcotics traffickers and poppy farmers. (United States, 2007a, p. 9)

The local Afghan population could have been the primary force behind any positive change if they felt there was no reason to live in fear of the Taliban or other insurgents. They were not be able to fully express what they wanted because they faced the fear that either they or a loved one may face severe consequences. This could have created more and more issues for the U.S. because this challenged U.S. efforts to implore upon the people that they need to demand change from their leaders. Vanda Felbab-Brown, a research fellow at the Kennedy School at Harvard said

Consequently an ‘eradication first’ policy is not only bound to fail—the crops will simply shift and appear elsewhere—but it will foment a backlash amongst the local population that has developed ties to the belligerents via the narco-economy. For instance, local populations could withhold human intelligence that could be critical to the campaign against the reinvigorated Taliban insurgency. (United States, 2007a, p. 29)

The eradication policy and practices discussed earlier left negative consequences in that they turned the people against the troops on the ground trying to do their job by getting the necessary information they need. They would not support American efforts to fight the narco-economy because they were not happy about what is happening around them and to their livelihoods. This also meant that they would not support the calls for justice because they see the eradication as a form of punishment by the government. If the people were not happy, there is little no reason to believe they would have been willing to support any political change that would come from the U.S. whom they see as part of the problem.

Another element in this discussion is the unhappiness and lack of trust those who use the name of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) for their own benefit or who got pulled in a system of payoffs to local war lords or other corrupt leaders. This soured the name and reputation of NGOs in the eyes of the local population. For example, in the 1990s, the U.N. funded many different Afghan NGOs in the hope this would lead to the development of
Afghanistan. However, this plan backfired because “while some of these organizations have established excellent track records in the most trying of conditions, others existed in name and bank account only” (Thier & Chopra, 2002, p. 899). Regardless of which direction the NGOs headed, they were often forced into doing what was demanded by local commanders. The desires of local commanders was to simply expand their patronage systems, “often lead[ing] to poor resource distribution and outright corruption,” which led to the determination that “many NGOs were not accountable, which resulted in subterfuge by some and widespread distrust by many” (Thier & Chopra, 2002, p. 899). This led to the works of other NGOs and even the USAID to be tainted by the history of NGOs in the region.

The Afghan population often dealt with the issues that created some of the corrupt networks that currently run Afghanistan. The corruption addressed above makes the local support of American efforts difficult to support further because there is little reason to support these organizations when the history of the region has taught the local population that organizations like these maybe under the command of those who only wish to enrich themselves.

**Tribal Life**

One of the most important characteristics of Afghanistan is the societal structure that Afghanistan is built on. For generations, throughout Afghanistan, tribes and clans have made up the social relationships that Afghans live under. In the Afghan narcotics debate, there are a number of ways in which the tribal/clan social systems play an important part that span across the nation and into neighboring Pakistan. The tribes/clans have controlled much of the trafficking in and out of Afghanistan for generations. For example, a 1965 bilateral agreement allowed landlocked Afghanistan to bring in goods from the Pakistani port city Karachi worked to the benefit of tribes. A Pushtun tribe, for example, would smuggle heroin, hashish, and other contraband to Karachi and would take things like refrigerators and foodstuffs back into Afghanistan (Peters, 2010b, 37). During the 1990’s, as the Taliban advanced on Kabul, their “financial backers dished out bribes to regional strongmen…” (Peters, 2010b, p. 82).

This introduces the debate regarding the role corruption plays in these tribes/clans. As the previous example demonstrated, the Taliban paid off ‘regional strongmen’ in order to
move forward in their efforts. Corruption was an already established method of business for the Afghan tribes/clans. In addition, there are tribal organizations that controlled legitimate shipping but were still required to pay off someone in order for their shipments not to be attacked. For example, the Achakzai tribe “which has long dominated the transport business on the Quetta-Kandahar route…,” had to pay off Taliban members in order for shipments to pass through safely. Reports say that the payoff amount would range between twenty five to forty percent of the value of the merchandise if it was a coalition shipment and ten percent for all other shipments (Peters, 2010a, p. 30). Once again, the corruption that exists between different tribes/clans affects the way in which they do business. There are a number of people involved who are paid off which only further the corruption debate.

In addition, Katzman explains that

Efforts against corruption also run up against an Afghan culture that rewards appointing and letting contracts to relatives and friends. Effects of corruption burst into public view in August 2010 when the large Kabul Bank nearly collapsed due in part to losses on large, poorly documented loans to major shareholders, many of whom are close to Karzai. (Katzman, 2011)

This exposes the reality of the Afghan culture; corruption within and from clan/tribe to clan/tribe is a major base upon which Afghan culture is built. When an attempt is made to change the way in which things are done, there is great resistance and, as in the example above, a near collapse of an institution such as a bank. Corruption could not be addressed because the social systems that have kept it alive were based on the social institutions that have run Afghanistan for generations.

The Karzai government has also failed in its fight against corruption because it has been unable to reach the tribal areas outside the capital. Though corruption was an epidemic at the national level as well, the failure to address this issue in an effective manner furthers the situation in tribal relationships. A study released in 2010 by Integrity Watch Afghanistan showed that forty two percent of responders said that tribal and local influential leaders were not efficient at combating corruption (Integrity Watch Afghanistan, 2010, p. 42). Carmen Gentile, in a USA today article, explains that “the Karzai government has yet to assert control over all bureaucratic facets of life here in western Nangarhar province, so tribal rivalries dominate daily life and corruption is endemic” (Gentile, 2011). Once again, as this
example shows, the failure of the Karzai government to curb the corruption within the tribes has led to tribal corruption systems.

In addition to this, Gretchen Peters explains that the Karzai government was filled with members of Karzai’s tribe who already had narcotics connections. She states

Perhaps most troubling of all, in the light of President Karzai's notorious reluctance to take on the drug trade, are persistent reports that his immediate family members are taking an active role in coordinating it, and that members of his Popalzai tribe, his half brother and other cronies, have been posted to positions along trafficking routes around Afghanistan. In May 2005, American diplomats cabled back to Washington that Karzai "has been unwilling to assert strong leadership" on the narcotics issue "even in his home province of Kandahar." Afghan technocrats who populated the Karzai regime at the outset of his government had mostly resigned or been sacked. Regional warlords and tribal chiefs with dubious records on drugs continue to populate the administration.

(Peters, 2010b, pp. 214-215)

Another aspect of the tribal structure of Afghanistan is the way corruption is conducted without cash, weapons or narcotics exchanging hands. The tribes/clans are often organized around certain industries such as smuggling networks. For example, “the Haqqani network would also enhance its credibility and power at the local level in the tribal areas through its mediation activity and by helping the Taliban to maintain its grip on Afghanistan” (Rassler & Brown, 2011, p. 28). The important aspect of this is that it shows that the Haqqani network grew in tribal influence because they were gaining favor and a positive reputation with other tribes done by working with or providing some type of asset or service to another tribe/clan. These tribal linkages grow when interactions such as this occurs. This further strengthened the relationship between the tribes/clans, including corruption between them at local and national levels. This means that Afghanistan cannot be changed without the nature of tribal/clan being changed. The influence that different tribes gain help establish new relationships that alter the way in which tribes interact with one another. Corruption is furthered in this process because it is not simply cash, narcotics, or weapons that exchange hands but because the tribes/clans have influence with one another, they can further the any criminal enterprise that will benefit all those involved. It allows the corruption to continue because corruption becomes the way in which tribes/clans do business; they establish relationships that are fostered by paying off one another with services.

Rassler & Brown give an example of how the corrupt network that had been established was used by the Taliban. They explain that “the American-led invasion of
Afghanistan that had succeeded in toppling the Taliban regime so quickly only managed to force this nexus of fighters a few dozen kilometers east, into North Waziristan, where it has remained ever since, with the Haqqanis’ continuing to play a central role” (Rassler & Brown, 2011, p. 38). What this demonstrates in relation to corruption is that the Haqqani’s had arranged their networks that allowed them to play a central role in the reformation of the Taliban. The payoffs that the local tribes had been getting, in the form of services, allowed the Taliban, highly sought after by U.S. and international forces, to hide and operate within ‘a few dozen kilometers.’ The strong bond of tribal corruption kept the Taliban safe because the tribe/clans were paid off by the Haqqani network.
CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

As displayed in Figure 1, the hectares of opium poppy increased and decreased over time. The fluctuation should have been an indication that the U.S. efforts were not decreasing the amount of narcotics produced in Afghanistan. Even the seizures did not fluctuate greatly as indicated in Figure 2. Furthermore, Figure 3 shows that the U.S. continued to spend money on counter narcotics activity in Afghanistan increasingly over the first few years in Afghanistan but failed to take into account that the money spent was not always applied to where it was needed. In the case of counter narcotics efforts in Afghanistan, the relatively stable amounts of seizures and levels of poppy cultivation indicate that the money was not having the intended affect. This begs the question: what aspect of the counter narcotics mission was missing from the U.S. strategy? The answer was corruption for the following reasons.

A report to the Senate caucus on the international narcotics control found that as of 2010, “systemic corruption at all levels of the Afghan government, fueled by the drug trade, remains a problem. It is estimated that the two largest income generators in Afghanistan are drugs and bribes, accounting for U.S. $2.8 billion and U.S. $2.5 billion per year, respectively” (United States, 2010). and that “government corruption in Afghanistan is a formidable problem” (United States, 2010, p. 3). The role corruption played should not have been a secondary factor in the U.S. counter narcotics policies in Afghanistan. It should have been understood that the culture of local villages and tribes is how Afghanistan operates.

Next, countering the established social systems should have been part of the beginning aspects of the counter narcotics mission in Afghanistan. However, there are those who argue against this tactic by saying that if we had disrupted the social norms of Afghanistan, Afghans would have been even less cooperative with U.S. forces in every aspect of the war effort. This thinking runs contrary to the fact that the basis on which Afghan social norms function is corruption and unless this issue was addressed, all plans were bound to fail. This meant that U.S. would have needed to address the base from the
beginning in order to change the way narcotics played a role in social interactions of Afghans.

Zarif adds that “corruption, the abuse of public office for personal benefit, is rampant in Afghanistan’s national and sub-national governance structure…Transparency International [ranked] Afghanistan ranked 172nd overall [out of 180]– indicating extremely high levels of perceived corruption” (Zarif, 2008, p. 20). An overwhelming problem in Afghanistan is finding the capable Afghans who were willing to risk their lives in the rural parts of Afghanistan is extremely rare, especially when they are paid $60-$70 [USD] a month (Rubin, 2007, p. 74). What needs to be drawn from this is the opportunity the U.S. missed in its fight against narcotics. The U.S. needed to focus more on the corrupt structure of Afghanistan because of the different levels in Afghanistan the narcotics related corruption reached.

A former U.S. military intelligence official said “the background of much of the country’s wealth and elite in the opium trade is problematic and may result in more pervasive corruption as the counternarcotic effort progresses” (Morgan, 2007, p. 148). The history of Afghanistan clearly showed generations of corruption that required direct action in order for there to be progress in the counter narcotics struggle. More importantly, the corrupt political leadership is often involved with warlords and drug lords. Many times, different leaders fit the description of all three positions. Those who engage in corruption do so because they have little incentive to stop. They are confident in the fact that as long as they continue to pay off or bring other powerful people into their fold, they can continue what they are doing. Yet the U.S. failed to understand the history and spent billions on other programs over the years while hectares of poppy stayed level and the amount of narcotics seized did not vary greatly as indicated in Figure 1 and Figure 2 respectively.

Relatedly, this demonstrates to the majority of the population that those in power and those with wealth are and will continue to benefit from the corruption while they suffer with lack of security and a stable legal income. A 2007 report showed that “corruption was 'worse than ever', people said, as aid flows and the illegal economy helped enriched the powerful” (Suhrke, 2007, p. 1305). This added to the despair of the local population because they see that they are not going to benefit from the cooperation with the U.S. or its allies in the counter narcotics struggle. They were left to continue their lot in life which, for many, was continuing to grow narcotics, a reliable occupation. The relatively stable levels of poppy
hectares, as opposed to a decreasing level of hectares, demonstrate that the local farmers who needed the most assistance to rise above their lower levels in society clearly did not benefit in the ways they needed to. They were forced to grow poppy plants because they were not benefiting from the U.S. foreign aid.

Another facet of corruption in Afghanistan was the way many political leaders came to power in Afghanistan. The U.S. often rewarded local leaders and war lords for their support in the initial stages of the Afghan war with positions of power in Afghanistan’s government at many different levels. The issue lies in the fact that many of these people were connected to the many different drug lords who control the narcotics industry in Afghanistan. Morgan Courtney explains that the way in which militia are demilitarized are endangered, political meddling in the appointment process for civil service jobs rises, turf battles increase factional fighting, and criminal organizations blending with government structures (Courtney, 2005, p. 42). They were determined to keep the systems of power in place and as long as the U.S. does not target the warlords openly and publically. Zarif wrote

Thus, the Taliban and related insurgents do not monopolize the protection of the poppy trade. Rather, they build relationships with Afghan police, local government administrators, and political leaders alike. The immediate effect of this general disregard for the rule of law is the flagrant display of the government’s inability to assert control. (Zarif, 2008, p. 35)

McCoy adds that “these same ‘corrupt and brutal’ warlords soon filled the political void by occupying cities and provinces across the country, creating conditions ideal for the resumption of heroin trafficking” (Zarif, 2008, p. 35).

This shows that the U.S. had to get involved publically and early to force the Afghan government to fight the rampant corruption. The success of any anti-corruption plan rests, as Gretchen Peters explained, with the local leadership. She noted “that ‘anticorruption efforts typically must come from within a nation’s political order to succeed’…” (Peters, 2010a, p. 5). The United States had to publically and early on pressure the Afghan leadership so that the pressure would be on the local Afghan government officials to fight corruption within their own government. Zarif stated that

To follow the maze of stakeholders and vulnerable institutions entangled in the narco-economy allows one to appreciate why counter-narcotic strategies with a bottom up focus are bound to fail in both near-term and long-run scenarios. Without neutralizing the interests of the most senior level officials benefiting from the narcotic trade, the various pillars of counter-narcotic strategy are
themselves countered through trickledown protection schemes involving corruptive behavior at multiple levels. The longer these relationships are allowed to endure and strengthen in the short-term, the greater the probability that a “narco-economy” will transform into a true “narco-state” and the future for good governance and the rule of law is fundamentally jeopardized. (Zarif, 2008, p. 71)

Gretchen Peters adds that when President Karzai attempted to battle corruption from within, he appointed Izzatullah Wasifi as the anti-corruption czar. This appointment ‘raised eyebrows’ because two decades earlier, Mr. Wasifi was convicted of attempting to sell heroin to an undercover agent at Cesars Palace in Las Vegas. President Karzai dismissed this claim as ‘youthful indiscretion’ (Peters, 2010a, p. 194).

Corruption spread to include more methodical and greedy leaders at all levels take bribes and do nothing in return for their people. Several reports on Afghanistan state that

Several Afghan officials suspected of corruption—a governor who is expected to be fired after the August 20 election, two police chiefs on whom the U.S. military has accumulated extensive dossiers outlining collaboration with drug traffickers and a handful of senior officials at ministries in Kabul...[and] police chiefs in poppy-dominated districts pay as much as [U.S] $100,000 to get appointed to a job that pays [U.S] $150 a month, with the knowledge that they will recoup far more in bribes and kickbacks. (United States, 2009, p. 11)

A report by the U.S. Department of State and Defense Interagency Assessment of the Counter Narcotics Program in Afghanistan “concluded that pervasive corruption along with illiterate police force recruits, ineffective officer training programs, low salaries and insecurity were impeding the creation of a professional Afghan police force” (Zarif, 2008, pp. 69-70). Without a professional police force, there was little reason for the local population to support any type of change. The local population had no reason to support the laws because they faced a corrupt police force daily. The U.S. conducted training for local police but the corrupt culture and low salaries always trumped the training; the history Afghanistan developed the culture of corruption. The narcotics trade paid and still pays higher wages to the local law enforcement than the Afghan or local governments which hurt local population’s perception of their government as well as U.S. efforts there.

In addition, the leadership of Afghanistan continues to be corrupt. Reports indicate that there has been slow political change in the form of anti-corruption action by the Karzai government. As mentioned earlier, there are many different corrupt officials within the various levels of government. This weakens “goodwill from foreign aid donors and
international coalition engagement[s] in Afghanistan” (Zarif, 2008, p. 70). Corruption is described, in terms of interdiction, as

The small traders who come to the village have to pay the police (or bandits) whom they pass on the road, who pass a share up to their superiors. The police chief of the district may have paid a large bribe to the Ministry of the Interior in Kabul to be appointed to a poppy producing district; he may also have paid a member of parliament or another influential person to introduce him to the right official in Kabul. These officials may also have paid bribes ("political contributions") to obtain a position where they can make so much money. Running a heroin laboratory requires payments to whoever controls the territory—in most cases a local strongman and a government official or the Taliban. Importing precursors requires bribing border guards (perhaps on both sides of the border) or paying an armed group for a covert escort. Smuggling the opium, morphine, or heroin out of Afghanistan requires access to an airfield or border crossing (controlled by the border police and Ariana Airlines, both of whose employees are reported to make significant income from drug trafficking), the escort of armed groups (Taliban, tribes, commanders), or expensive specialists in packaging such as those who seal heroin inside licit commodities for export. The bureaucratic, military, political, or social superiors of those directly involved in facilitating trafficking claim a right to shares of the resulting tribute, though the higher the money moves, the less evident is its connection to the flowers whence it originated. (Rubin & Sherman, 2008, p. 23)

It is important to note that there were some attempts to curb the narcotics trade. There were investigations of personnel by U.S. and U.K. counter narcotics forces that, by the March of 2009, resulted in “the [convictions of] 259 people on drug charges, which carry a minimum sentence of 10 years in prison. But those convicted were low-level to medium-level figures; no major traffickers have even been arrested in Afghanistan since 2006” (United States, 2009, p. 11). However, this court ran into trouble when the chief judge was fired after he failed the polygraph test administered every three months to vetted personnel (United States, 2009, p. 11). What must be taken away from this is that even the work done to ensure honesty is imperfect because the system to curb narcotics trade is still susceptible to failure. Their culture of corruption that runs Afghanistan needed drastic change from the very beginning of the U.S. involvement in Afghanistan. The U.S. did not break what has come to be known as “functional corruption” (United States, 2009, p. 11).

There have been efforts to track the illegal profits made from the corruption in Afghanistan. The main obstacle in overcoming this is that the laws are very difficult to enforce and narcotics trafficking is rampant throughout Afghanistan. A report to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee stated that “Ahmed Wali Karzi, the powerful head of
the Kandahar Provincial Council and one of the President’s brothers,” has a well-developed reputation of corruption in the Afghan narcotics industry because of stories such as

How Afghan police and military commanders who seize drugs in southern Afghanistan are told by Ahmed Wali to return them to the traffickers, how he arranged the imprisonment of a DEA informant who had tipped the Americans to a drug-laden truck near Kabul, how his accusers often turn up dead. No proof has surfaced, and he and President Karzai have denied the accusations (United States, 2009, p. 11).

This issue was taken to President Karzai himself. The same report states that a “senior U.S. diplomat, his British counterpart and the country chiefs of their two intelligence services met with President Karzai” (United States, 2009, p. 11), where it was suggested to President Karzi that his brother was involved in narcotics smuggling and it would be in the best interest of the nation if he was sent out of the country as an ambassador. President Karzai responded to the questions by the U.S. diplomat regarding any connections that his brother is involved in the narcotics trade by asking for proof. The diplomat’s only response was that there were rumors and circumstantial evidence but nothing that would be accountable in a court (United States, 2009, p. 11). President Karzai, in an interview with the German magazine Der Spiegel, called the allegations against his brother “rubbish,” and that he has “thoroughly investigated all of these allegations and of course none of them are true” (Walsh, 2008).

Another factor to consider is whether the U.S. strategy has failed to a certain extent because the U.S. is still unwilling to go after those in power. A 2009 report to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations stated that

At a recent interagency meeting to discuss the new initiative, a British official asked at what level the investigators would stop. ‘We said, if you have evidence, it doesn’t matter, a U.S. official told the committee staff.’ The new political leadership in the U.S. embassy has told us there is no red line on anybody for corruption.’ (United States, 2009, p. 12)

There was evidence that the eradication figures were not accurate because of corruption. The UNODC reported in 2007 that

Around 10 per cent of the poppy crop was eradicated according to UNODC, but these were mainly marginal fields, the result of ‘corrupt deals between landowners, village elders and eradication teams’. The eradication figures themselves have become a source of corruption – local officials are reported to inflate the figures as governors are compensated at $120 [USD] for each eradicated hectare (Goodhand, 2008, p. 417).
Because the upper level stake holders were able to protect their profits from eradication, they have the money to ensure their continued operation. This has led to the ingrained system of corruption to continue year after year because their profits continue uninterrupted. By this logic, the undermining effort of non-farming stakeholders to safeguard against eradication contradicts the government’s implementation of law enforcement and criminal justice pillars. Eradication has an equally perverse effect on controlling the monetary supplement available to feed insecurity since

It does not reduce the amount of drug money available to fund insurgency, terrorism, and corruption. In many cases, it increases the value of the trade. In purely economic terms, the diminished supply raises the commodity price of opium in certain areas. Alternatively, it has been suggested that due to the relationship between identified global demand for illicit opiates and opium production estimates, there is a surplus of opium being stockpiled. Eradication of existing opium poppy, therefore, increases the potential profitability for the drug traffickers in possession of this reserve supply (Zarif, 2008, pp. 66-67).

This demonstrates that those in power will always work towards safe guarding their profits through corruption because there is profit to create from ensuring the continued growth of the poppy plant and production of narcotics.

The U.S. needed to do everything necessary to ensure the security and legitimacy of voter registration, elections, and vote counting. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) should have helped the Afghan security forces provide better security before, during and after any election. International monitoring would have helped ensure legitimacy and oversee Afghanistan's polling sites. This relates to narcotics corruption because the people voted for are those who often support the drug lords, are in the narcotics trade business, or in some way ensuring the continuation of the narcotics industry in Afghanistan. The overall legitimacy of the Afghan government is undermined by rampant corruption and a failure to provide basic services to the population over the past ten years. Where Afghan systems and institutions have benefited from high quality technical assistance and mentoring, they have made great progress. Making such support more consistent with qualified mentors to advise and monitor officials, pushing such efforts to the provincial and district levels, and channeling more assistance through Afghan institutions benefiting from this high quality support would have helped restore and maintain the legitimacy of the Afghan government. For the U.S., a more legitimate Afghan government meant more focus on ensuring less narcotics corruption.
Another factor that should have been considered that is the social relationships that Afghanistan is based on, namely the fact that the nation is built on clan and family ties. This has also meant that corruption has been part of the social structure of the nation. With this in mind, a survey released in 2010 by Integrity Watch Afghanistan showed that thirty one percent of respondents said that the corruption established under the Karzai government was based on ethnic ties. The same survey adds that an additional seven percent of respondents said that corrupt relationships under the Karzai government were established due to family basis (Integrity Watch Afghanistan, 2010, p. 42). The same survey showed that the thirty nine percent said ethnic ties are the relationship that is most often involved in corruption and an additional eight percent based on family ties (Integrity Watch Afghanistan, 2010, p. 43). In addition, the same survey results demonstrated that “the perception of ethnic dominance in corruption was high among civil servants as well [46%]” (Integrity Watch Afghanistan, 2010, p. 44). What all these numbers indicate is that the U.S. missed an opportunity to address a major avenue through which corruption has grown. A decade after the U.S. began fighting the narcotics industry in Afghanistan, the numbers are telling us that corruption is largely based on ethnic/family ties. The U.S. would have needed to address this aspect of corruption in Afghan society in order to have an effect so that the family/ethnic based corruption because changing an established social structure takes time.

There is the issue of how the legal system continued to fail the Afghan people. The U.S. Five Pillar strategy, designed to counter the narcotics industry in Afghanistan, included addressing the short comings of the judicial systems of Afghanistan. However, this pillar failed because the services offered to Afghans did not have the desired effect. The Integrity Watch Afghanistan survey, released in 2010, stated that thirty seven percent of respondents, when answering a question regarding when they dealt with corruption in the judiciary, said corruption arose when they went to file a complaint (Integrity Watch Afghanistan, 2010, p. 74). To add to this, fifty percent of respondents said they have turned to other non-state justice providers to resolve a problem (Integrity Watch Afghanistan, 2010, p. 76). Figure 6 shows that respondents faced corruption at several different levels of the legal system of Afghanistan.

Gretchen Peters, in her work Crime and Insurgency in the Tribal Areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan said, “local community members interviewed for this paper in
various parts of the country said they perceived the commissions, as well the Taliban’s separately-run Sharia Court system, to be more fair—even if strict and ruthless—than the notoriously corrupt Afghan justice system” (Peters, 2010a, p. 18). Peters adds another example of a local village that trusted a Taliban operated Shari court more “than the notoriously corrupt Afghan justice system” (Peters, 2010a, p. 18).

What all this means is that the pillar intended to develop the judicial systems in Afghanistan failed. Over the past decade, Afghans have found issue with the government run judicial systems. As the data above suggests, even filing a complaint with the judiciary has become a corruptible event. The corruption that Afghans have faced and continue to face demonstrates that the established corruption in the judicial system in Afghanistan continues. Therefore, Afghans have largely turned to outside entities, such as Taliban-run Shari courts. This, in part, is the result of the U.S. missing the opportunity to tackle corruption early in Afghanistan.

Another aspect of the U.S. counter narcotics strategy in Afghanistan was the public information pillar. To begin with, there must be an understanding of how the money allocated for this pillar was being used. A report by the DoD and the DoS both raised the concern of possible double billing by contractors to subcontractors that made financing this pillar ineffective. The report goes on to say that representatives from the DoD and DoS in the field were not communicating well enough for there to be a unified message to local farmers and local leaders. More importantly, the contracts for public information campaigns were unsuccessful because they lacked any type of concrete metrics by which the effect of the pillar could be measured (Zarif, 2008, p. 52). As displayed in Figure 1, opium poppy cultivation went up from 104,000 hectares in 2005 to 165,000 hectares in 2006. The increases in the years preceding the release of this report, released in 2007, support the claim made by the authors of the interagency assessment because the locals who grow the opium poppies were the ones who did not get the necessary information they needed. Finally, the necessary people from the U.S. embassy in Kabul were not represented “at weekly communication working groups chaired by the Afghan education Minister” (Zarif, 2008, p. 53).

Also, this pillar came under scrutiny from the very beginning because of the lack of faith many Afghans had in the capabilities of their government. This was later supported by a
report commissioned in 2007 by the DoD and DoS titled U.S. Departments of State and Defense Interagency Assessment of the Counter Narcotics Program in Afghanistan. The report stated that there was great difficulty in getting the necessary information out to farmers and local leaders in Afghanistan because the non-Afghan personnel that needed to reach the locals could not do so safely (Kicklighter & Krongard, 2007, p. 42). This is supported by the increase in opium poppy cultivation.

What this means in terms of narcotics related corruption in Afghanistan is that this pillar had holes in it that made it ineffective, leading to the continuation of the narcotics industry, including corruption. Though not directly leading to corruption, the failure of this pillar added to the continuation of an Afghan narcotics industry that, as described above, included corruption, one of the many contributing factors to the Afghan narcotics industry.

Similar thinking applies to the efforts of the DoD in fighting the narcotics industry in Afghanistan. As discussed earlier, the DoD did not directly work towards countering the narcotics industry of Afghanistan. After years of involvement in Afghanistan, they began to provide support to the DEA missions in Afghanistan. In addition, it became clear that many of the commanders did not see counter-narcotics as a top priority. James Risen, author of best-selling book State of War, quoted an “Army Green Beret who said he was ‘specifically ordered to ignore heroin and opium when he and his unit discovered them on patrol’” (United States, 2009, p. 5). Congress received reports that troops refused to interrupt the narcotics systems in Afghanistan and declining the requests from the DEA to go after major drug kingpins.

As early as 2004, Assistant Secretary of State Bobby Charles who ran the State Department’s Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement said,

> We needed to be pro-active...If we let it go for even one year, I knew we would lose it. [He] argued to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld that stopping the drug trade should be made an explicit part of the military mission in Afghanistan. Charles remembers that Rumsfeld initially seemed to agree, but the Pentagon’s senior generals, already suffering from a drain on resources for the Iraq war, resisted strongly...[to which he responded by saying it was] a monumental error that opened the door for the steadily rising opium production and deepening ties between the drug traffickers and the insurgency (United States, 2009, p. 5).

This strategy continued even after “NATO agreed that drug labs could be attacked in late 2008, the Pentagon resisted and no effort was approved until early 2009, according to a former senior U.S. general involved in the discussion. Instead the focus was on eradicating
poppy cultivation, a half-step that had little chance of success from the outset in part because of circumstances unique to Afghanistan and in part because of a lack of resources” (United States, 2009, p. 6).

The DoD policy not to interfere more directly in the narcotics industry in Afghanistan allowed for a strong arm of U.S. presence to not be applied in the fight. It allowed corruption to continue in Afghanistan because it allowed the narcotics industry to go unaddressed. The abilities of the DoD would have been a useful and effective weapon in the counter narcotics efforts. The failure of the DoD to not directly address this issue only adds to the narcotics industry, including corruption.

As part of the counter narcotics strategy in Afghanistan, the U.S. attempted to develop alternate economies for Afghans in an effort to reduce their dependence on the opium economy. To that end, the U.S. attempted to develop alternative crops that Afghans would grow and be able to sell nationally and internationally. However, Afghan farmers increasingly have turned away from other crops, partly because of persistent drought, which the hardy poppies more easily survive, and the destruction of irrigation systems, on which other crops are more dependent. However, the chief reason is economic: A farmer can earn $500-$700 per acre of poppies, compared to $33 per acre of wheat. (Curtis & Phillips, 2007)

There was also the fact that growing alternative crops had to come with the reality of effective law enforcement if farmers were to stick to the laws and grow the alternative crops. Lisa Curtis and James Phillips, Senior Research Fellows at the Heritage Foundation explained that “carrots in the form of microcredit programs to reduce farmers' dependence on loans from traffickers, food crop subsidies, cut-rate fertilizer, and other inducements to switch to alternative crops must be accompanied with the stick of law enforcement” (Curtis & Phillips, 2007, p. 1).

This would require that Afghan law enforcement agencies not be corrupt when they when they came across narcotics growth and activity. However, this was not often the case in Afghanistan. Curtis and Phillips go on to explain that many in the Afghan National Police “go months without pay because of corruption and problems with the payroll system” (p. 1), and “this encourages them to extort bribes and makes them vulnerable to corruption” (p. 1).

In addition there was very little evidence that this pillar had its desired effects (Zarif, 2008, p. 54). In fact, the previously introduced DoD and DoS interagency uses Helmand province to demonstrate that eradication along with yearly increases in AL funding led to
annual increases in poppy cultivation (Zarif, 2008, p. 54). The issue here was that the low income of farmers who followed the law relative to the income earned by farmers who grew poppy plants created unstable livelihoods. The dangers posed by the presence of those who wished and often violently protected the continuation of the narcotics industry created instability.

There was also concern about how the money paid to farmers occurred. USAID knew how much money they spent on this pillar every year but did not have a complete understanding of how the money was benefiting the local farmers in Afghanistan. This is largely because the analysis of this pillar lacks empirical support. As Zarif explains it,

A consultant working for one of USAID’s private sector implementation partners in Helmand recounted it as such: ‘we knew roughly how many people we had paid, but not how many people we had helped We hadn’t been systematically asking our thousands of workers about their needs – their land, their assets, their debts – so we didn’t know whether we were meeting those needs. That would have been an enormous task, and we didn’t have the time or the staff to do it. We didn’t know if we were helping the people whose need was greatest. We didn’t know what effect we were having on Helmand’s labor market, or opium market. We knew the number that mattered – two and a half million work days – and that’s what we had charged toward’ (Zarif, 2008, pp. 55-56).

Figure 3, which shows the changes in funding for counter narcotics activities in Afghanistan, adds to the concern as to how this money was going to farmers. There were billions of U.S. dollars going towards the counter narcotics efforts in Afghanistan while the concerns of how the money was reaching those who needed it the most was not clearly answered. This could have easily meant that the money was ending up in the hands of those who were corrupt. The money could have funneled its way into the hands of local leaders, Taliban, government officials, just to name a few.

An even greater consequence of this pillar was that those provinces in Afghanistan that continued to grow poppies would get funding from this pillar but those provinces that would have low poppy growth would not get money because they did not meet the definition of success. This would leave those in provinces with little of the AL funding exposed to any number of factors, including instability and corruption. This weakness the pillar because even though a province was not directly involved in growing the poppies, the local people perpetuated the narcotics trade by “…facilitate[ing] trafficking, processing, smuggling, and laundering activities related to the trade” (Zarif, 2008, p. 58). The provinces that were often
looked at as being successful had locals that could be forced to continue in the narcotics industry because of their economic circumstances. According to the UNODC, Nangargar province (considered “poppy free”) witnessed a raise in cannabis cultivation. The average wage according to the UN for construction work is $3.60 (USD), while growing wheat was $4.40 (USD) and collection of opium gum from poppy plants was $9.50 (USD). In Helmand, it was fifteen dollars (USD) a day for lancing (Ahrari et al., 2009, p. 62). Gretchen Peters assessed the plans she observed in the Helmand province as being “utterly useless” (Peters, 2010b, p. 216).

The next pillar under consideration is interdiction. The principal behind this pillar was to stop the narcotics flow out of Afghanistan. As demonstrated in Figure 2, seizure rates of narcotics in Afghanistan remained steady from 2002-2008. This means, with regards to the interdiction aspect of the five pillar strategy, that the changes in this strategy did not produce significant effects. Large increases or decreases would have signaled improvements or failures in changing policies. The assessment is best summarized by Vanda Felbab-Brown, Fellow in Foreign Policy at 21st Century Defense Initiative in The Brookings Institution. She adds that

Even the NATO-led selective interdiction of targeting designated Taliban-linked traffickers (the United States has identified fifty such traffickers) is not free from pitfalls. First, selective interdiction can actually provide opportunities for the Taliban to directly take over the trafficking role or strengthen the alliance between the remaining traffickers and the Taliban, thus achieving the opposite of what it aims for. In fact, interdiction measures in Peru and Colombia frequently resulted in tightening the belligerents-traffickers nexus and belligerents’ takeover of trafficking. Second, uncalibrated interdiction can provoke intense turf wars among the remaining traffickers, thus intensifying violence in the country and muddling the battlefield picture by introducing a new form of conflict. Third, such selective interdiction can also send the message that the best way to be a trafficker is to be a member of the Afghan government, thus perpetuating a sense of impunity and corruption and undermining long-term state building and legitimacy. Finally, the effectiveness of interdiction is to a great extent dependent on the quality of rule of law in Afghanistan plus the capacity and quality of the justice and corrections systems, all of which are woefully lacking in Afghanistan and are deeply corrupt (Felbab-Brown, 2009).

The interdiction policies needed the cooperation of Afghan authorities in the law enforcement and court systems of Afghanistan. As described earlier, both the judicial and law enforcement systems of Afghanistan are dealing with serious corruption issues. The
pillar faced these issues as other pillars were failing. Corruption riddled other pillars which impaired any progress this pillar may have had.

In addition to corruption hindering any progress of interdiction, eradication teams would face violence from militant and local farmers who opposed such action. For example, attacks by militants and farmers led to the eradication teams failing in reaching their goals in the 2004-2005 season. The U.S. had pushed for eradication efforts early in the growing season in an attempt to lessen the resistance the teams would face from local farmers as well giving the farmers more time to plant legal crops. A 2009 report to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee stated that “the UNODC reported that 15 Afghan police officers were killed and 31 were injured during eradication campaigns” (United States, 2009, p. 7).

A key aspect of the eradication pillar was the idea of spraying poppy fields with herbicides, a concept delayed till 2008 by President Karzai. In addition to the Karzai government, the U.K. and other governments also opposed the aerial spraying of herbicides of poppy plants. A large concern with regards to the aerial spraying was that it was reminiscent of the Soviet-era policies that attempted to curb the narcotics trade in Afghanistan. Ronald Neumann, a former U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan said, “Afghans also still remember that the Russians dropped small bombs disguised as toys. Every time a child picked one up, death and destruction resulted. The general belief is that bad things come from planes” (United States, 2009, p. 7). It would also give the Taliban a new way to demonize U.S. efforts. Ronald Neumann added, “if we began aerial spraying of poppy crops, every birth defect in Afghanistan would be blamed on the United States” (United States, 2009, p. 7).

Eradication also failed because the farmers eventually returned to their poppy farms since they did not earn what they needed from the alternative crops programs and they knew that the eradication teams would eventually leave. A report to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee stated that “half the villages where the U.S. eradicated poppy in 2007 simply planted the crop again in the fall of 2008” (United States, 2009, p. 7). This pillar also created an increase in the following years after eradication teams would leave because the farmers would need to grow more poppy plants to make up for the previous year’s lost crop. As Gretchen Peters stated in her book, “when supplies go down, prices go up” (Peters, 2010b, p. 221).
Eradication, over the course of time, proved to be a costly failure. DynCorp International, a major U.S. government contractor, was paid $35 million to $45 million (USD) a year to supervise manual eradication efforts most often carried out by Afghans paid a few U.S. dollars a day. In addition, the State Department spent around $100 million (USD) annually on aircraft used in eradication and counter-narcotics programs.

Finally, there is the work USAID did in Afghanistan. Many of the military gains proved unsustainable largely because of the failures of the foreign-aid bureaucracy. The typical practice for USAID was to use contracts in an attempt to accomplish their goals and “using parallel systems to manage funds and projects through UN agencies and private firms, have meant that only ten to thirty percent of the money allocated to Afghanistan is actually being spent in the country” (Ghani, 2010, p. 41). Billions of U.S. dollars were spent by these organizations, allegedly to build the capacity of the Afghan government. However, the net result was an actual decline in capacity. As indicated on Figure 4, Afghanistan went from 117th in 2005 to 179th in 2009 on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index; Somalia was the only nation more corrupt than Afghanistan in 2009. The 62 point drop for Afghanistan in the span of four years “is unprecedented.” (Ghani, 2010, p. 43).
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Besides the global consequences of the drug trade, the Afghan narcotics problem causes great concern due to its ties to the insurgency, the fact that it is the major driver of corruption in Afghanistan, and distortion of the Afghan legal economy. The U.S. needed to use its power to directly support Afghan counter narcotics programs in curbing the narcotics industry in Afghanistan. The new authorities permit the destruction of labs, drug storage facilities, drug processing equipment, and drug caches and should contribute to breaking the drug-insurgency funding nexus and the corruption associated with the opium/heroin trade. Crop substitution and alternative livelihood programs, seen as a key pillar of effectively countering narcotics, have been disastrously underdeveloped and under-resourced. The narcotics trade will persist until such programs allow Afghans to reclaim their land for licit agriculture. Targeting those who grow the poppy plant will continue but the focus should have been on the crippling corruption because of the large part it played in the Afghan narcotics industry.

The U.S. has introduced a new plan to fight the drug lords that operate in Afghanistan. According to a State Department documents, the new strategy has two primary goals in regards to fighting drugs in Afghanistan; “Goal 1: Counter the link between the narcotics and the insurgency and severely reduce the support the insurgency receives from the narcotics industry… Goal 2: Address the narcotics corruption nexus and reinforce the government of Afghanistan” (Department of State, 2010, pp. 2-3). In addition, some observers, such as former Coordinator for Counter-Narcotics and Justice Reform Thomas Schweich, in a July 27, 2008 New York Times article, have gone so far as to assert that Karzai, to build political support, is deliberately tolerating officials in his government who are allegedly involved in the narcotics trade. The New York Times reported allegations (October 5, 2008) that another Karzai brother, Qandahar provincial council chief Ahmad Wali Karzai, has protected narcotics trafficking in the province… (Katzman, 2009, p. 4).
A report released by the U.S. Senate in 2010 cited a survey by David Mansfield, a fellow at the Carr Center, Harvard Kennedy School, who has conducted research on the role of opium in Afghanistan for the last 14 growing seasons. He wrote,

This image of the Talib as drugs trafficker and the drugs trafficker as Talib is not the one that is most recognizable to the bulk of the Afghan population. In fact, there is a growing belief in the south that those working for the government are more actively involved in the trade in narcotics than the Taliban. Even in other parts of the country, accusations are made against senior government officials and are widely believed by rural Afghans. Indeed, farmers in some of the most remote rural areas often claim that it is only those in positions of power in their area that can trade illegal drugs. There is a growing recognition of the role that both insurgents and corrupt government officials play in the drugs trade. There are even concerns over the level of cooperation that might exist between state and anti-state actors in provinces like Helmand, not only in facilitating the movement of drugs from one part of the country to another but also in engineering a level of instability in a given area so that the production and trade of opium can thrive (United States, 2010, p. 41).

According to calculations compiled by a CRS report on foreign assistance to Afghanistan, the U.S., through its numerous programs, has spent over fifty two billion (USD) in order to stabilize Afghanistan (Tarnoff, 2010, p. 1). However, even with all that money, narcotics continued to be a major player to affect every aspect of an Afghan’s life and the progress the U.S. made in Afghanistan. Approximately, half of this fifty two billion dollar (USD) is likely to have been wasted because a lot of the initiatives that were meant to assist those on the ground in Afghanistan wound up not taking effect because the intentions of the programs were voided by the corrupt actions of those in charge in Afghanistan. The money was intended to support the the development of Afghanistan but nothing could happen if the people who were to be in charge locally did the opposite of what was required of them. In addition, the U.S. continued to fail because of the misguided nature of the U.S. counter narcotics strategy. The U.S. focused on every aspect of the narcotics trade in Afghanistan from the beginning, except corruption. Though this issue is not new to Afghanistan, the U.S. would have had to make this a priority from the beginning because the evidence was that even before the U.S. entered the nation, the culture of Afghanistan was based largely on corruption. Over time, the other strategies showed many signs of failure.

In the future, the U.S. should focus its resources on what becomes the prevalent trend on the ground. Corruption became the number one facet that continued the narcotics industry in Afghanistan. Yet the U.S. continued to spend billions of dollars and send U.S. personnel to
continue the counter narcotics struggle in other ways. In the future, the U.S. needs to take a better survey of what is happening on the ground and direct their efforts against the real problem from the beginning rather than spreading out their resources across so many areas. Ornatowski and Pottahil explore Digital Communications Surveillance (DCS) in their essay, Digital Communications Surveillance: A Challenge for Rhetoric Studies. They explain that DCS “in its broadest sense[,] includes analysis of any type of digital data” (Ornatowski & Pottahil, 2012, p. 12). If the U.S. applies this type of thinking to future efforts, it can go a long way in understanding the true or underlying nature of any conflict that may arise. The potential here, as the authors explain, is that

DCS combines natural language processing, artificial intelligence, computational linguistics, text analysis, and other data gathering and processing technologies (such as geographic modeling and visualization), to allow analysts to understand, track, predict, and even perhaps control attitudes and behaviors on individual, group, or even global scale (Ornatowski & Pottahil, 2012, p. 13).

In the future, having the knowledge from a wide variety of digital sources would create an invaluable collection of information from which more direct actions could be taken early on. This would help ensure that future efforts by the U.S. are more focused on the targets that truly need to be reached.
REFERENCES


